

REMARKS

The Examiner states that Claims 1-55 are pending in the application. Applicants believe that Claims 18, 32, 45, and 52 were previously canceled. By this amendment, Claims 3 and 5 have been canceled. Accordingly, Claims 1, 2, 4, 6-17, 19-31, 33-44, 46-51, and 53-55 are pending. Claims 1, 33-40, 46, 50, 53, and 55 have been amended. Reconsideration of Claims 1, 2, 4, 6-17, 19-31, 33-44, 46-51, and 53-55, in view of the above amendments and following remarks, is respectfully requested.

The Amendments to Claims 1, 33-40, 46, 50, 53, and 55

The independent claims, Claims 1, 33-40, 46, 50, 53, and 55, have been amended to recite that each band of absorbent material in the composite is continuous along the composite's length. Support for the amendment can be found throughout the application as originally filed. See, for example, Claim 3 and FIGURES 1, 2C, 4A, 4B, 5, 11A, 11B, and 30A.

Applicants submit that, because the amendment to each of the independent claims is merely the incorporation of the recitation of Claim 3, which has been examined, the amendments do not raise new issues and do not require further search by the Examiner. Applicants also believe that the amendments place the application in condition for allowance. Entry of the amendment is therefore respectfully requested.

The Rejection of Claims 1-15, 17-19, 22, 27, 28, 31-44, 46-51, and 53-55 Under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e)

Claims 1-15, 17-19, 22, 27, 28, 31-44, 46-51, and 53-55 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,733,273, issued to Ahr. Withdrawal of this grounds for rejection is respectfully requested for the following reasons.

The independent claims have been amended as noted above to recite that each band of absorbent material is continuous along the composite's length. The Ahr reference fails to

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describe a composite that includes bands of absorbent material wherein each band is continuous along the composite's length. Because the reference fails to exactly describe the invention as claimed, the reference is not anticipatory and withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested. Applicants further submit that the cited reference fails to teach, suggest, provide any motivation to make, or otherwise render obvious the invention as now claimed.

The Rejection of Claims 16, 20, 21, 29, and 30 Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 16, 20, 21, 29, and 30 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,733,273, issued to Ahr. Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested for the following reasons.

Claims 16, 20, 21, 29, and 30 depend from Claim 1 or claims that depend from Claim 1. Claim 1 has been amended to recite that each band of absorbent material is continuous along the composite's length. The cited reference fails to teach or suggest a composite that includes bands that are continuous along the composite's length.

Because the Ahr reference fails to teach, suggest, provide any motivation to make, or otherwise render obvious the invention as now claimed, the claimed invention is nonobvious and patentable over the cited reference. Withdrawal of this grounds for rejection is respectfully requested.

The Rejection of Claims 23-26 Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 23-26 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,733,273, issued to Ahr, in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,294,710, issued to Schmidt et al. Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested for the following reasons.

Claims 23-26 depend from Claim 1 or claims that depend from Claim 1. As noted above, Claim 1 has been amended to recite that each band of absorbent material is continuous along the

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composite's length. The deficiencies of the teachings of the Ahr reference noted above are not cured by the teaching of the Schmidt reference.

Because the cited references, either alone or in combination, fail to teach, suggest, provide any motivation to make, or otherwise render obvious the invention as now claimed, the claimed invention is nonobvious and patentable over the cited references. Withdrawal of this grounds for rejection is respectfully requested.

The Rejection of Claims 45 and 52 Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 45 and 52 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,733,273, issued to Ahr, in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,326,528, issued to Ryan et al. Claims 45 and 52 were previously canceled. Withdrawal of this grounds for rejection is respectfully requested.

Conclusion

In view of the above amendments and foregoing remarks, applicants believe that Claims 1, 2, 4, 6-17, 19-31, 33-44, 46-51, and 53-55 are in condition for allowance. If any issues remain that may be expeditiously addressed in a telephone interview, the Examiner is encouraged to telephone applicants' attorney at 206-695-1755.

Respectfully submitted,

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